

Digital Snapshot Classroom Activity: *The Anti-Slavery Alphabet*

Students will

- Understand the origins of *The Anti-Slavery Alphabet*
- Learn how the horrors of slavery were conveyed to white women and children
- Lend their voice to another social issue they are passionate about
- Create materials to convey information to other students

Materials

- Computer/tablet with internet access
- Paper and writing utensils
- Coloring utensils
- Cardstock, two sheets per student
- Hole punch

Preparation

- National Archives Written Document Analysis Worksheet, one copy per student (optional)
- Yarn, three 3” pieces per student

Required Links

- [Digital Snapshot exhibit](#)

Curricular Connections

Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards for the Social Studies

Eighth Grade

- 8.8 - Assess the social and economic conflicts between the North and South that led to the American Civil War.
 - 8.8.1 - Trace the origins and development of slavery in the United States.

United States Government

- USG.1 - Examine the basic concepts of democracy.
 - USG.1.1 - Evaluate the fundamental worth and dignity of the individual that all persons are entitled to life, liberty, and due process of law.
- USG.6 - Differentiate civil rights from civil liberties and describe how each have been interpreted and amended throughout United States’ history.
 - USG.6.1 - Examine the civil liberties and rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights.

Introduction

To understand the past and see its impact on the present, students should engage with primary sources from past events. For students to truly understand the documents and have the correct context, teachers must first lay the groundwork for this connection. The teacher should begin this lesson with a brief introduction about slavery, the antebellum period, and the anti-slavery movement. A short introduction to *The Anti-Slavery Alphabet* and a list of additional resources is [available here](#). The teacher should explain both its national significance and the relationship it has to Mississippi antebellum history and give students a brief overview of the pages in the Digital Snapshot.

The selected pages from *The Anti-Slavery Alphabet* in this exhibit highlights the book art, the themes of enslavement and freedom, and the violence inherent in slavery. This book was used to inform white women and children in the 1840s northern United States and give them a way to communicate these issues to the next generation. Teachers can also use other documents suggested by scholars on this website.

Students will analyze one page from the book, using either questions provided below or the National Archives Written Document Analysis Worksheet. Students will then create an alphabet book focused around a contemporary social issue of their choosing or a children's book connected to the anti-slavery movement.

Educators and students can also use other documents suggested by scholars on this website or search the [full The Anti-Slavery Alphabet digital collection](#) online.

Discussion Questions

Assign each student a page to analyze with the option of utilizing the questions below or the National Archives Written Document Analysis Worksheet. After students have analyzed their photographs, redirect the class to a classroom discussion to share.

1. Explain what is happening on the page.
2. Why do you think that the form of a children's book was chosen to be a way to pass on anti-slavery beliefs to the younger generation?
3. How does the language used throughout the book help you better understand the realities of slavery?
4. Why are these aspects of slavery chosen to work with a young and/or female audience?

Activity

1. Give students the choice between the following activities:
 - a. Create a children's book to explain the content learned in *The Anti-Slavery Alphabet* to an audience of younger students.
 - b. Create an alphabet book (in the style of *The Anti-Slavery Alphabet*) about a contemporary social issue of the student's choosing.
2. When their writing is complete, have students decorate their content.

3. For each activity, students can create a front and back cover for their book using cardstock. All pages can be connected using a hole punch and yarn.
4. Have students share their books with the rest of the class.